



Show-Me

The "Official" Newsletter of Literacy in Missouri

MAY '06

ISSUE NO. 120

Literacy...

Spring Director's Meeting in Jefferson City

Adult Education & Literacy Directors from around the state converged in Jefferson City April 11-13 for the annual Spring Director's Meeting. The conference meetings were held at the Capital Plaza Hotel.

Tuesday

With tight security due to President Bush's visit to Jefferson City, Ron Jewell, DESE-AEL Section Director welcomed directors to the three-day event.

Missouri AEL is proudly celebrating the great finish to FY 2005. Missouri's totals include: 60,454 students enrolled, 37,052 students with 12+ hours, 4,416 students obtained their GED, 2,279 GED Online students, 12,218 ESL students and 1,013 teachers trained.

Don Eisinger, presented data reflecting Missouri's accomplishments in meeting the state's incentive requirements.

Rod Nunn, Director of Division of Workforce Development discussed collaboration between the One Stop Career Centers and AEL Programs to provide necessary skills required for jobs in the current labor market.

ADA Compliance was discussed by John Nigro of the Federal Office of Civil Rights in Kansas City. He reviewed the accommodation requirements and how they impact AEL.

Bill Poteet gave an update on GED Testing and briefly discussed the fraudulent GED Certificates circulating in the St. Louis area.

DESE-AEL Finance Supervisor, Mike Griggs, provided information to directors regarding funding and budgeting. Griggs reviewed the program budget spreadsheets and explained when finance reports are due.

On Tuesday evening, AEL directors said farewell to Howard Parker who will be retiring from his duties as AEL director in Sikeston. On Thursday, Howard was presented with a Missouri map autographed by AEL supervisors and directors depicting their program locations around the state.

Wednesday

On Wednesday morning, Dale Wimer discussed working with agencies and provided examples of

state and local-driven initiatives.

Theresa Noellsch, DESE Section Supervisor discussed AEL Content Standards and the correlation with performance goals.

Tom Robbins discussed with directors what they could expect to see in the FY07 quarterly and yearly reviews and the Table 5 ACES Report. It was suggested that Robbins present at the MAACCE conference at Tan-Tar-A in June. Directors and Data Entry Specialists will have the option to attend a pre-conference meeting where Tom Robbins will discuss ACES Queries.

Changes and explanations regarding teacher certification was provided by Theresa Noellsch. Professional Development will now be reported on-line by AEL directors.

Mark Shore explained background procedures for new teachers will include using a new company, Indentix for electronic fingerprinting versus ink fingerprinting. An appointment date, time and location will be selected on-line by the teacher or program director. Processing is expected to take 1-2 weeks where using ink has taken 10-12 weeks to attain clearance. The cost for this process is \$50.95.

Professional Development updates were presented by John Stains, Director of the PDC. John discussed changes in the post-workshop activity for the Pre Certification Workshop and Beginning Teachers Workshop. Starting in July, teachers will no longer have to log into Blackboard to acquire the activity, complete it or submit to the PDC. New teacher handbooks were provided to each program director.

After lunch, the MAELAA meeting was held and then the group traveled to the capital for legislative visits.

The day ended on Wednesday with a reception.

Thursday

Thursday morning's agenda kicked off with Kim Litza presenting an update on GED Online. Currently, 31 AEL programs offer GED Online. There will be three regional training

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sessions over the summer for online teachers.

Janie Robertson gave a presentation on DOC Parolee Re-Entry. Robertson included a video depicting the GED classroom in the DOC.

Gene Johnson gave the directors an update on MSIP changes and explained how the programs will be evaluated.

Theresa Noellsch presented an overview on the results of Federal research. Directors were provided with several web sites to review key elements or components on instruction in math, reading, distance learning and ESL.

Tom Robbins, AEL Section Supervisor in charge of data collection, presented data updates which included ACES reports and

DIRECTORS,

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NCSALL's Adult Persistence Study

by John Comings, Andrea Parrella, & Lisa Soricone

Adults choose to participate in educational programs while children participate because of legal mandates and strong social and cultural forces that identify schooling as the proper "work" of childhood. In fact, most school-aged students probably never seriously consider dropping out. An adult, on the other hand, must make an active decision to participate in each class session and often must overcome significant barriers to attend classes. Most adults come to adult basic education (ABE), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), or adult secondary education (ASE) programs with goals that require hundreds if not thousands of hours of learning to achieve. Every adult education program should help adult students persist in their learning until they reach their educational goals.

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is conducting a study on learner persistence. The first phase of NCSALL's study used research as a tool to develop advice for practitioners on how to help adults persist in their studies. In addition, the study developed advice for policymakers on how to structure funding and accountability systems in ways that will support persistence. The next phase of the study will test and refine this advice in programs. In the first phase of this research, the study team read previous studies and related literature, and talked with practitioners about how they have tried to help adult students persist longer in their studies. The team also interviewed 150 pre-general educational development (GED) students in New England to gain their insights into the supports and barriers to persistence. Most of the students were native speakers of English, but a few were immigrants whose English was sufficient for them to be in a pre-GED class.

Defining Persistence

The staff of the Persistence Study spent time working on their definition of persistence so as to be clear about what they were trying to measure. They found persistence to be a complicated concept. Most of the literature on adult education defines persistence as the length of time an adult attends a class or tutoring sessions (Beder, 1991; Comings, 1995; Quigley, 1997; Tracy-Mumford, 1994; Wikelund, Reder, & Hart-Landsberg, 1992; Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald, & Morgan, 1994), but learning may extend

beyond attendance in a specific program. The definition of persistence used in this study is: *adults staying in programs for as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study when they must drop out of their programs, and returning to a program as soon as the demands of their lives allow.* The study team interviewed learners near the beginning of their participation in a program and again four months later. A persistent learner was one who, at the second interview, was still in class, was no longer in class but was involved in organized self-study, or who had transferred to another class.

Advice

We classify adult students in many ways: by gender, ethnicity, age, employment status, number and age of children, previous school experience, and educational background of other adults in their lives. The first phase of the Persistence Study revealed that these categories do not tell us much about how to help adults persist in their education. The only significant findings were that immigrants, those over the age of 30, and parents of teenage or grown children were more likely to persist than others in the study. The greater likelihood of persistence by immigrant students in ESOL classes is well documented (Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald, & Morgan, 1994). The findings of this study suggest that this effect continues as immigrants learn English and move on to ABE and GED programs. Grown children might encourage their parents to join and persist in a program. On the other hand, adults who are over 30 are more likely to have teenage or grown children than those under 30. These findings might point to older students persisting longer because they benefit from the maturity that comes with age and they no longer have the responsibilities of caring for small children.

Two aspects of educational experience were also associated with persistence. Adults who had been involved in previous efforts at basic skills education, self-study, or vocational skill training were more likely to persist than those who had not. The strongest relationship was with those who had undertaken self-study. Adults who mentioned a specific goal, such as "help my children" or "get a better job" when asked why they had entered a program, were more likely to persist than those who either mentioned no goal or said they were doing it for themselves. These findings suggest that

experience with education may increase an adult's self-confidence about learning.

These relationships also suggest that motivation, especially as demonstrated by undertaking self-study or by being clear about the goal for attendance, supports persistence.

The pre-GED students identified a range of supports and barriers to their persistence; clear trends were evident when the study team analyzed their responses. The team recorded these trends, reviewed the research literature and the data from interviews with practitioners, and developed the following advice, which describes four supports to persistence.

The first support is awareness and management of the positive and negative forces that help and hinder persistence.

In searching for a framework for analyzing data, the study team sought a theoretical model that would both place the adult learner in a central position and be useful to program managers seeking practical advice on how to increase persistence. The study team chose to employ a force-field analysis as developed by the sociologist Kurt Lewin. Lewin's theory places an individual in a field of forces that support or inhibit action along a particular path (Gilbert, Fisk, & Lindzey, 1998; Lewin, 1999). Understanding the forces, identifying which are strongest, and deciding which are most amenable to manipulation provide an indication of how to help someone move in a desired direction, such as reaching an educational goal.

In the case of adult students, positive forces, such as the desire for a higher income, help support persistence in an adult education program. Negative forces, such as lack of free time to study, push adults to drop out. From the time adults enter programs to the time when they either achieve their goals or drop out, both positive and negative forces are acting upon them. Any intervention by an ABE program meant to increase persistence must help adults to strengthen the positive forces and lessen the negative forces.

The force-field analysis looks at barriers and supports as existing at many levels of importance, from those that have no real effect on persistence to those that have a very strong influence on persistence. The force-field analysis also suggests that strengthening or weakening a force that can be influenced might offset the effects of another force that cannot be influenced. Thus, an adult with a very strong need for education to gain better employment might put aside his or her embarrassment, while very strong embarrassment might keep a less strongly motivated student from coming to

class.

Programs must help students to develop an understanding of the negative and positive forces that affect their persistence. Building on that understanding, each student must make plans to manage these forces so that persistence is more likely. The plans that come out of such an exercise should include strategies for persistence when the forces that affect a person's life cause them to drop out, and these plans must be revised as adults persist in their studies and these forces change.

Adult students in this study emphasized positive forces. The strongest positive force mentioned by adult students was the support of people, particularly their families, friends, teacher, and fellow students, followed by self-efficacy and personal goals. Most learners mentioned at least three positive forces, while some mentioned many more. At the same time, many learners mentioned no negative forces or just one. Of the negative forces mentioned, no single force was common.

The force-field theory itself offers a tool for understanding and planning to manage these forces. Students can be encouraged to discuss their persistence in terms of the force-field and to build their plan from that discussion. A classroom force-field activity can begin with students identifying all of the supports and barriers to their persistence. [See [page 19](#) for directions on how to lead this activity in your classroom.] They can then categorize them into those that are most likely to help or hinder their persistence.

Once the crucial forces are identified, students can plan to build their supports and reduce their barriers. As happens in some programs, staff must be open to having the outcome of this activity be early dropout for students who, for any reason, are not ready to persist in their studies. If this is the outcome, adults should be helped to make a plan to prepare to return and be successful later. The management of these forces may be an individual responsibility, one that a group of students takes on together, or one that engages a whole community. For example, students might have transportation needs. A group activity might lead to ride sharing or a request to a public agency for transportation support.

The second support is self-efficacy.

The educational program must help adult students build self-efficacy about reaching their goals. The term *self-confidence* is used more often in adult education literature, but self-efficacy is a more useful term to describe this support. Self-confidence is a global feeling of being able to accomplish most tasks. Self-efficacy is focused on a specific task and represents the feeling of being able to accomplish that task, which in this context is successful learning in ABE, ESOL, or ASE programs. The study drew from the theory of a social

scientist, Albert Bandura, for advice on building self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Adult education programs should provide the following experiences to their participants as a means to build self-efficacy.

Mastery experiences allow an adult to be successful in learning and to have authentic evidence of that success. This does not mean that instruction should be designed to produce only easy and constant success. Adults must also experience overcoming failure and eventually achieving success through a sustained effort. Instruction should help them develop this insight. Some programs take care to provide regular recognition of progress and celebrations of achievement. Others make sure that instruction provides opportunities for success early in program participation. These efforts provide learners with opportunities to experience success.

Vicarious experiences are those provided by social models. Adult learners should come in contact with adults who are just like them and have succeeded in an ABE, ESOL, or GED class. These role models, both through the

“Managing positive and negative forces, self-efficacy, setting goals, and making measurable progress help learners stay in programs.”

knowledge they share directly and the indirect teaching of their behavior, help adult students to acquire the skills to manage the many demands of learning. Some programs employ successful present or former students as speakers during intake and orientation activities, while others recruit past learners as counselors, teachers, and directors. These past students provide models of success.

Social persuasion is support from teachers, staff, counselors, fellow students, family, and friends that reinforces self-efficacy. These verbal assurances are needed, in part, to overcome the negative self-efficacy about learning built up during previous schooling. Most practitioners provide verbal assurances, but some programs encourage family members to provide this positive reinforcement as well. Some teachers take great care to develop a culture of support among students in their classes. These efforts ensure positive support for students.

Addressing physiological and emotional states is the acknowledgement that negative feelings can result from poor self-efficacy and can also

lead to low self-efficacy. Examples of these states are tension and stress, among other negative emotional states. Adult learners must be helped to perceive and interpret these conditions so that they do not affect their self-efficacy. . . Some practitioners feel uncomfortable addressing the personal problems of their students, and all practitioners must acknowledge that they are not trained mental health professionals. Even so, many teachers use life histories and dialogue journals to help students identify the physical and mental states that can affect their learning. For example, adults with limited English skills may feel anxiety when they have to speak in class. A teacher might ask her class to write about these feelings and practice speaking even with anxiety. Just the acknowledgement that feelings can affect learning can help diminish their negative effect.

Many of the orientation and instructional activities identified by practitioners in this study provide the experiences that Bandura has outlined. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy can act as a powerful framework within which programs can improve on the activities they have already undertaken.

The third support to persistence is the establishment of a goal by the student.

This process begins before an adult enters a program. An adult who could be classified as a potential ABE, ESOL, or ASE student experiences an event in his or her life that causes him or her to enter an educational program. The event might be something dramatic: a person might enter the United States as a refugee and find that she does not have the language skills needed to qualify for a job. The event might be less dramatic: a parent may decide he needs more education when his first child begins school. The event might be subtle: a school dropout might have always felt the desire to study for the GED and when her children are older and need less attention, she finally has some free time available for education. This event provides potential adult students with goals they hope to accomplish by entering an ABE, ESOL, or ASE program. The staff of the educational program must help the potential adult student define his or her goals and understand the many instructional objectives that must be met on the road to meeting that goal. Teachers must then use these student goals as the context for instruction and intermittently review them, since they may change.

NCSALL,

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The fourth support is progress toward reaching a goal.

Since goals are important supports to persistence, adult students must make progress toward reaching their goals. They must also be able to measure that progress. Programs must provide services of sufficient quality that students make progress, and programs must have assessment procedures that allow students to measure their own progress. Much of the recent interest in measuring progress has come from the need to build systems of program accountability. Helping students measure their own progress may require tools and methods that are not appropriate for accountability purposes. Accountability systems need measures that are easy to collect and quantify. These may not be useful to students and difficult to integrate into instruction. Portfolio and authentic assessment approaches may have weaknesses in an accountability system but might be very useful for adults who want to measure their own progress. These kinds of assessments can be an integral part of an instructional approach.

Further research into assessment might produce a hybrid system that serves both needs and could lead to certification of progress that occurs more frequently than at present in most programs. At this time, most adults who enter ABE, ESOL, or ASE programs will gain certification only if they pass the GED test or acquire an adult high school diploma. Program-level certification may be helpful to student morale, but state-level or even national certification of achievement might make smaller increments of learner achievement more meaningful and provide a range of goal steps.

In Conclusion

Aspects of these four supports already exist in some programs, but a combination of the four may provide a more supportive environment to persistence. These supports are more likely to be built if the policymakers who provide funding value them. This means that persistence must become a more important measure in program accountability. Funding agencies must provide the technical assistance and training needed for programs to put these supports in place. Policymakers could then hold programs accountable for the quality of their intake, orientation,

instruction, and program approaches that support persistence. Using the expanded definition presented here, persistence itself should be an outcome measured as part of an accountability system.

Persistence and Accountability

From the point of view of an accountability system, student persistence ends when an adult drops out of a program. When an adult returns to a program after a lapse in attendance, the program may view that student as a dropout who has returned. From the point of view of the student, persistence may continue after drop out through self-study or distance learning. The adult may view him- or herself as a persistent learner who could not attend for a while. Using only attendance in class or in tutoring sessions as a measure of persistence undervalues effective learning activities that should be encouraged. A wider definition of persistence would allow practitioners to focus on helping to become persistent learners adults who use episodes of program participation as critical parts of a comprehensive learning strategy that involves other forms of learning.

The definition developed by the study team in the Persistence Study values self-study, transfer, and reentry into a program as part of a pattern of persistence. For this expanded definition of persistence to become part of an accountability system, it must be measurable. This would require procedures for collecting evidence of "time-on-task" that could be credited to a program. Some of this "time-on-task" might be spent in classes, some in tutoring sessions, and some in self-study through technology, media, or instructional materials. Other "time-on-task" measures might include increased time reading or reading of new, more challenging materials and engagement in community improvement efforts that require the use of English, literacy, and math skills. Methods of measuring and validating these efforts and linking them to a plan of learning developed within a program context would transform some dropouts into persistent learners who are not presently attending formal classes or tutoring sessions.

This expanded definition would require programs to relate to their students differently. Programs would need added resources to stay connected and serve adults who are not attending formal classes or tutoring sessions. With these added resources, programs could treat their students as long-term clients who use a wide range of services, some provided by the program and some by other agencies, to achieve significant improvement in their skills. Since a single adult student might participate in the services of several different programs, a way to document progress would have to be shared among them.

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About the Authors

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Full Report Available

For information on how to order the full report from which this article is drawn, turn to the [Blackboard](#).

This article was reprinted from the NCSALL website.

PDC Advisory Committee News

The PDC Advisory Committee held a meeting on March 30th to look at several items the PDC has been working on.

Desk reviews were done for the Beginning Teachers Assistance Program (BTAP) workshop. Input was given by several members and suggested changes were noted. The two new ESL in-service topics, "Language Sub skills: Integrating Grammar, Pronunciation, and Vocabulary" and "Culture in the ESL Classroom" to begin next fall were also desk reviewed. Diane Taveggia also spent time discussing the ESL breakout sessions presented at both the PCW and the BTAP.

The summer workshop schedule was presented to the committee along with topic descriptions and the changes in formatting of the ETW level workshops. The PDC announced it was returning to the multi topic format for the ETW to allow choices in topics to be provided. Other changes announced included how the teachers who attend the PCW and BTAP will access, complete and submit their post workshop activities, how the pre activity process will work, and how the elimination of most post workshop activities will be addressed for teachers who need the additional four hours of PD credit each year.

The committee spent time discussing the "Request for PD Approval" form and as a group agreed on recommendations for changes to the form to make it more user friendly, yet provide pertinent information DESE AEL would need to make a decision on approval. The recommendations have been forwarded to Dale Wimer, PD Supervisor for approval.

Director professional development was also discussed. The committee discussed some of the topics in development now and gave suggestions for additional topics to be considered. It was announced the needs assessment for the Spring Directors Conference would center around legal issues for an AEL program. This assessment would be

used to generate information for the session to be provided as a pre conference activity at MAACCE.

The next meeting of the committee will be May 25th. At 1 p.m. at the State Office Building in Jefferson City.

Workshop Enrollments Will Begin on April 17th.

A Change in the Post Workshop Activity for the PCW & BTAP

Beginning in July, the post workshop activity for the Pre Certification Workshop (PCW) and the Beginning Teachers Assistance Program (BTAP) workshop will be available on the PDC web site.

Teachers will no longer have to log into Blackboard to acquire the activity, complete it or submit to the PDC. Resources for both workshops will continue to be available on Blackboard for review by the teacher.

The completed activity will be emailed to Kim Nash upon completion. There will still be a 30 day deadline for completion.

DIRECTORS,

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retention levels.

Directors had an opportunity to share Best Practices in Round Table discussions. Topics included: Student Recruiting and Persistence, AEL Yearly Reviews, Using ACES Reports and GED Fast Track.

The next Director's Meeting will be held in Fall 2006. Dates and times are expected to be announced later this summer.

FY07 In-service Scheduling to Begin on August 1st

For the first time, the PDC will begin the process for scheduling fiscal year 2007 in-services on August 1st. Directors can submit the "Request to Host an In-service" form on that day. This will allow in-services to begin as early as September 1st.

The first schedule will be released by August 22nd and enrollments can begin at that time. This will allow programs who choose, to be able to schedule in-services with fall local staff meetings and allow additional time slots for those who host multiple in-services throughout the year.

Beginning in FY07, the PDC will be offering 16 AEL & ESL topics for in-services. Topics include; (New Topics in Blue)

AEL topics;

Essay Writing & Scoring
Applied Math
Societal Diversity
Decision Making/Problem Solving
Employability Skills
Customer Satisfaction
Proper Testing Procedures

ESL topics

Language Sub Skills
Culture in the ESL Classroom
Speaking & Listening
Life Skills in the ESL Classroom
Classroom Management
ESL Materials & Resources

Video Packet Topics

How Adults Learn
Learning Differences
Reading for Adults

Submitted by John Stains, Director of Professional Development

MAEL PDC Pre-Certification Workshop

- May 20-21

Upcoming 2006 Conferences

MAACCE June 21-23, 2006 Osage
Beach, Mo.

AAACE November 7-10, 2006 Pitts-
burgh, Pa.

NCEA November 29-December 6, 2006
St. Louis

Send Us Your Success Stories!

Does your program have a success story to share? Show-Me Literacy newsletter editor, Nancy Eads, is looking for program "success stories"-- whether it be about students, instructors, overall program achievement, or other things you would like to share with readers. "AEL programs see successes almost on a daily basis. This is a great opportunity for program directors to spotlight volunteers, teachers as well as student stories.

The deadline for submissions will be the 15th each month and can be emailed to: neads@rolla.k12.mo.us

ABC's of Literacy: Acting for a Better Community "Unlock the Power of Literacy"

Regional Conference

May 18 & 19, 2006

Webster University in St. Louis

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